

LTSE 2021 Conference Proceeding

Title: Don't let feedback becomes dangling data... Improve student engagement with feedback!

Conference theme: Effective assessment & constructive feedback

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The session discussed the importance of feedback and examined ways in which tutors can improve student engagement with feedback. A case study was presented to facilitate discussions and reflection.

We all expect students to read and engage with the feedback they receive from their tutors, but do the students really bother as long as they get the marks they expect? Perhaps, the following example will remind you of a time when you have wondered what to do to improve student engagement with feedback? The student who emailed me back in June 2021 is a Year One student enrolled on a Marketing degree course. The student submitted his assignment in January 21 (Semester 1) but did not realise he had failed his module until June!

From:
Sent: 24 June 2021 23:38
To: Wilfrid Flanda <W.Flanda@westminster.ac.uk>
Subject: Professional Development for Marketers

Hello Sir,
Am writing to inform you that I just saw my Current grades for the academic year and it says my work for the professional Development for marketers module is incomplete. Have 29 has an overall mark.
I remember finishing all your work, (...)
If it's possible can you tell me what work of yours, I didn't not complete. My attendance was good in the online classes and remember submitting my work.
Don't know what I missed but please let me know, I finished my 1st and 2nd semester knowing i completed everything.

Student engagement with feedback is even more important considering the impact COVID-19 has on the students who have experienced loneliness and isolation (Ali & Smith, 2015). For example, Muthuprasad, et al. (2021), claim that the level of interaction between the tutors and the learners as well as the feedback (Gilbert, 2015) directly impact the student's perceptions of online learning. Key findings from the literature suggest that affective responses to feedback are mediated by students' relationships with their teachers (Carless and

Boud, 2018). In other words, student engagement with feedback is enhanced if teachers signify they care about the student in the feedback (Sutton, 2012).

Feedback and current issues

Feedback is one of the most powerful ways to enhance student achievement and encourage student learning (Gibbs and Simpson, 2005). However, there are reports of sector-wide dissatisfaction with feedback (Bloxham, 2014). Students do not check their written assignment feedback when they receive their marks (Gibbs and Simpson, 2005). Essentially, there is a 'feedback gap' (Evans, 2013; Sadler, 2010), representing a dissociation between the efforts of lecturers and utilisation by students. I suggest that a social constructivist approach to feedback (Fig 1) could improve student engagement with feedback.

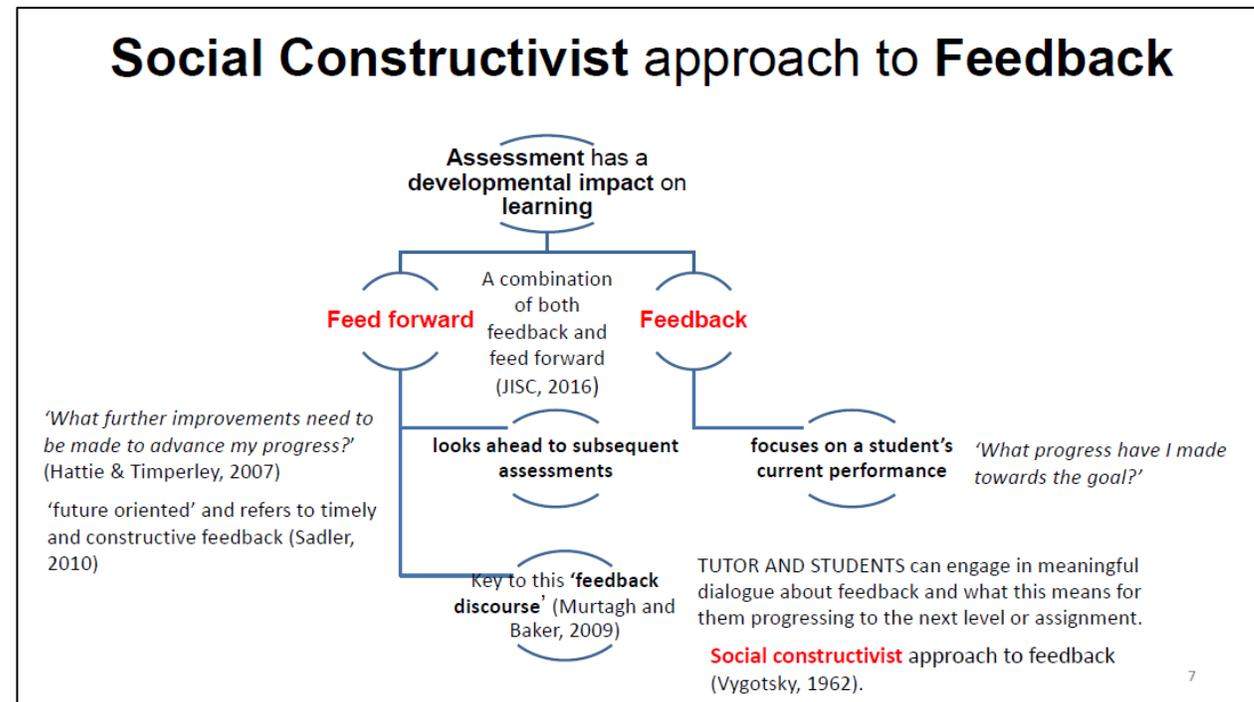
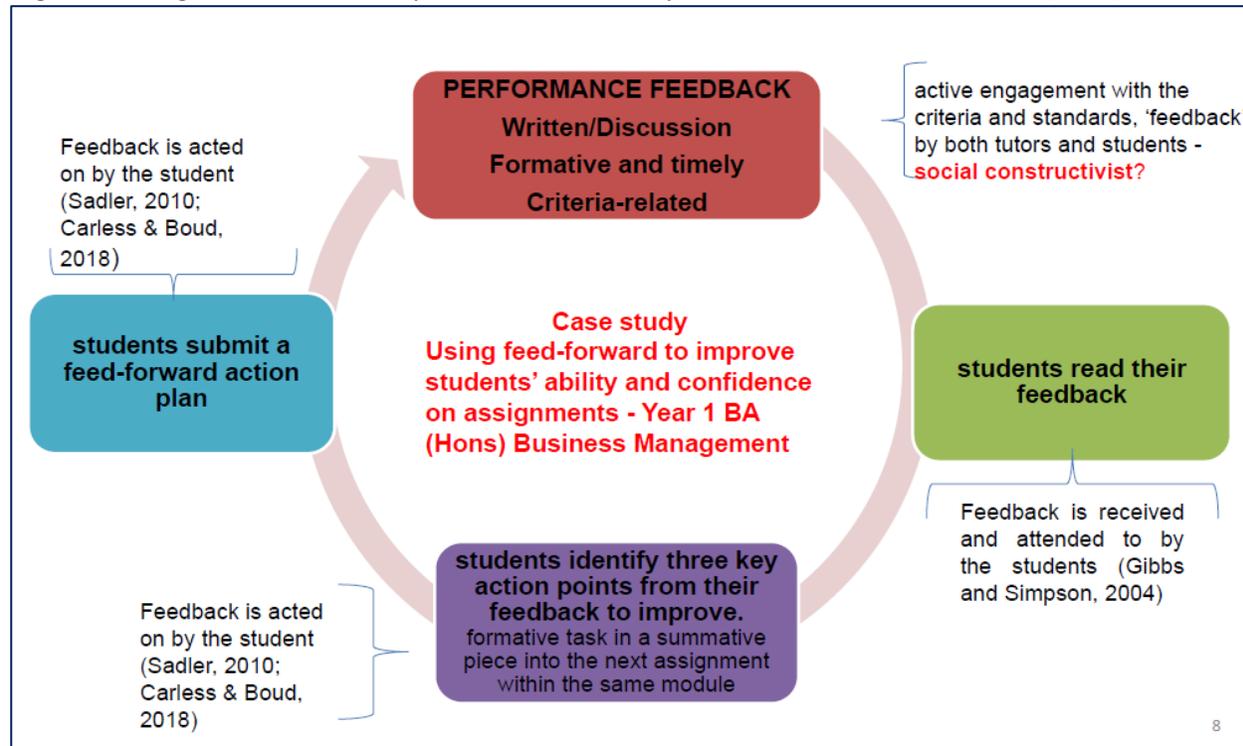


Figure 1: Social constructivist approach to feedback.

A social constructivist approach to feedback hinges on the useful notion of 'feedback discourse' (Murtagh and Baker, 2009) where tutors and students can engage in a meaningful dialogue about feedback, and what this means for them progressing to the next level or assignment. Essentially, this will require us to move from feedback to feedforward which is future orientated (Sadler, 2010). Figure 2 summarises how as a team we implemented a social constructivist approach to feedback based on feedforward (Year One Business Management module). The process starts with a performance feedback which is based on the marking criteria. Then, the students are required to read their feedback and identify three key action points from their feedback to improve. The process is completed when the students submit a feed-forward action plan. In our case, the students submitted a formative task in a summative piece into the next assignment within the same module.

Figure 2: Using feedforward to improve students' ability and confidence - Year One BA (Hons) Business Management)



In conclusion, this period of change requires educators to provide evidence on what works and does not work to inform future practices. The case study demonstrates the importance of the tutor's role in building and maintaining relationships and climate (online; face-to-face). The case study also demonstrates the importance of student engagement in teaching and learning but also students as active participants in their learning process (i.e. feedback acted on by the students).

Refocusing on the students enables them to appreciate how feedback can facilitate their own learning but also their own contribution (Winston and Pitt, 2017). At programme level, module leaders could be encouraged to clarify how students should respond to the feedback. Also, the module handbook templates can be updated to ensure module leaders clarify how students should respond to the feedback.

Indicative bibliography

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